

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 ACDA-05 AID-05 /096 W

----- 039447

R 120602Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5858

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 9668

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR FR XO XA XF ET YS YE IS SA SO UR US

SUBJ: THINKING ABOUT TFAI

REF: (A) ADDIS 6459; (B) ADDIS 5927

SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES SOME THOUGHTS FROM THE VANTAGE  
POINT OF ADDIS ABABA ON THE POSSIBLE EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION  
IN THE TFAI. COMMENTS BY ADDRESSEES ON THESE IDEAS ARE INVITED.

IN PARAS WHICH FOLLOW, WE DISCUSS IN TURN WHAT WE KNOW OF  
FRENCH THINKING REGARDING THE LEADERSHIP OF THE TERRITORIAL

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GOVT BY ALI AREF BOURHAN IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS BOTH

IN TFAI AND IN ETHIOPIA; THE ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE TO THE FRENCH, VIZ, CONTINUING RELIANCE ON THE AFAR, ON THE ISSA, OR ON A AFAR/ISSA COALITION. WE THEN GO ON TO REVIEW CURRENTLY COCEIVABLE GUARANTEES FOR AN INDEPENDENT TFAI (A) BY FRANCE, (B) BY THE OAU, AND (C) BY THE ARABS.

I. FRANCE AND ALI AREF: CAN THE STATUS QUO HOLD?

1. OUR FRENCH COLLEAGUES HERE HAVE LEFT US WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THE EVENTS OF LAST JUNE (CF. REFS) WERE READ BY (AT LEAST ELEMENTS OF) THE FRENCH GOVT AS INDICATIVE OF ALI AREF BOURHAN'S EBBING POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE AFAR COMMUNITY IN TFAI. EVENTS IN ETHIOPIA, ALI AREF'S END-JUNE PRONOUNCEMENTS SUGGESTING HIS INTEREST IN AN AFAR "ENSEMBLE", HIS PROBES FOR POSSIBLE ARAB SUPPORT FOR AN INDEPENENT TFAI, HIS LONG-STANDING TIES TO THE NOW EXILED AFAR SULTAN ALI MIRAH HANFERE WHOSE FUTURE INFLUENCE AMONG DANKALI (ETHIOPIAN) AFAR IS UNCLEAR, MAY WELL BE CENTRAL TO PARIS REVIEW OF FRANCE'S TFAI ALTERNATIVES NOW IN COURSE.

2. WE START FROM THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE FRENCH WOULD OPT TO STICK WITH ALI AREF (OR AN AFAR SUBSTITUTE) AS LONG AS POSSIBLE SINCE AN ISSA INSTRUMENT COULD PROVE HARDER FOR PARIS TO HANDLE. THIS WOULD SEEM LIKELY IF MOGADISCIO REMAINS INTENT UPON PRE-EMPTING ADDIS IN TFAI. HOWEVER, THE ISSA OPTION MIGHT CONCEIVABLY PROVE VIABLE IF THE SOMALIS DECIDE THAT IT WOULD BE TO THEIR ADVANTAGE TO MODERATE PRESSURE ON FRANCE FOR A CHANGE IN THE STATUS QUO, PERFORCE FRAUGHT WITH UNCERTAINTIES AND DANGERS INTER ALIA TO THEM.

3. WHILE EVENTS IN ETHIOPIA'S DANKALIA REGION ARE IN THEIR INCEPTION, AND IT IS THEREFORE STILL TOO EARLY TO OFFER VERY MEANINGFUL PREDICTIONS ON THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF THE ETHIOPIAN AFAR, THIS VERY UNCERTAINTY, PRESUMABLY, WILL ALSO COMPEL THE FRENCH TO THINK ABOUT ALI AREF BOURHAN'S FUTURE USEFULNESS TO THEM. IT WOULD BE SIMPLER IF -- THE ALI AREF/ALI MIRAH MECHANISM BEING BROKEN -- ALI AREF COULD HENCEFORTH COOPERATE WITH THE EPMG TO MAINTAIN AT CRUCIAL ELECTORAL MOEMENTS AN ETHNIC MIX IN TFAI SUPPORTIVE OF THE (FRENCH) STATUS QUO. BUT ALI AREF IS NOW UNDERSTANDABLY VIEWED WITH SOME SUSPICION

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BY THE PMAC, AND THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES SEEM UNLIKELY SOON TO HAVE SUFFICIENT CONTROL OVER THEIR NATIVE AFAR TO SUBSTITUTE THEMSELVES OR THEIR NEW AFAR DESIGNEE FOR THE OUSTED AFAR SULTAN AS A CONTROL MECHANISM.

4. LOCAL TALK HAS IT THAT THE FRENCH ARE ALREADY GROOMING OMAR FARAH IL TIREH, REPORTEDLY AN ISSA, TO REPLACE ALI AREF AS THEIR INSTRUMENT FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF TFAI SHOULD THEY

DECIDE TO DISCARD HIM. BE THAT AS IT MAY, THE FRENCH WOULD SEEM, AT LEAST IN THEORY, TO HAVE THE OPTION OF WORKING THROUGH THE ISSAS IF ALI AREF'S LEADERSHIP OF THE TFAI AFAR WERE TO LOOK COMPROMISED BEYOND POSSIBILITY OF REPAIR AND IF RPT IF NO OTHER SUITABLE AFAR SEEMED READILY AVAILABLE TO REPLACE HIM.

5. SEEN FROM HERE, THE FRENCH, IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, COULD ALSO TRY TO WORK OUT A COALITION OF AFARS AND ISSAS TO WHICH THEIR TERRITORIAL GOVT MIGHT SUBSEQUENTLY BE ENTRUSTED. GIVEN ETHNIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL (ETHIO-SOMALI) POLITICAL ANTAGONISMS THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE THE HARD WAY TO GO -- BUT PERHAPS THERE IS NONE EASIER. A VIABLE INDEPENDENCE FOR TFAI WOULD PRESUMABLY REQUIRE SUCH A COALITION. NEVERTHELESS, DECOLONIZATION PRESSURES BEING WHAT THEY ARE, INDEPENDENCE MAY WELL COME WITHOUT IT, WHATEVER THE CONSEQUENCES.

## II. THE QUESTION OF GUARANTEES

6. THE NEW FRENCH AMB TO ETHIOPIA -- AN OLD HAND AT DECOLONIZATION (AS THE QUAI'S FORMER ALGERIAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR) -- TOLD AMB HUMMEL JULY 24 THAT FRANCE IS "DISINCLINED", IN THE ABSENCE OF ADEQUATE AUTHORITY, TO ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GUARANTEEING TFAI'S INDEPENDENCE. A MEANINGFUL OAU GUARANTEE FOR SUCH A STATUS MAY ALSO BE DIFFICULT OF ACHIEVEMENT SO LONG AS ETHIO-SOMALI ANTAGONISMS REMAIN ACUTE. HOWEVER, WE WOULD NOT EXCLUDE A TIMELY WILLINGNESS IN ADDIS AND PERHAPS MOGADISCIO TO "STAND DOWN" SUFFICIENTLY TO LET THE FRENCH GET OUT FROM UNDER IF IT BECAME APPARENT -- WHICH IS STILL FAR FROM THE CASE -- THAT PARIS WERE NOW INTERESTED IN SUCH AN "OUT."

7. ALTERNATIVELY, AN ARAB GUARANTEE MIGHT BE SOLICITED BY A TFAIR TERRITORIAL GOVT WHICH FELT ITSELF AUTHORIZED BY PARIS (AND ENCOURAGED BY THE EXCELLENCE OF FRANCO-ARAB RALTIONS)  
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TO EXPLORE THIS OPTION. TO BE SURE, SUCH A GUARANTEE COULD PROVE HARD TO CONTRIVE BETWEEN ARAB GOVTS RUNNING THE IDEOLOGICAL GAMUT FROM SAUDI CONSERVATISM TO BA'ATHY MILITANCY. SINGLE-STATE ARAB GUARANTEES SEEM EQUALLY DIFFICULT FOR SIMILAR REASONS. ASSUMING, HOWEVER, THAT THESE PROBLEMS ARE SOLVED, NEITHER THE ETHIOPIAN NOR OTHER SUB-SAHARA AFRICAN GOVTS WOULD PRESUMABLY BE VERY HAPPY WITH SUCH AN OUTCOME -- INVOLVING AS IT WOULD A FURTHER EXPANSION OF ARAB INFLUENCE ON THE CONTINENT -- BUT THEY MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO OFFER VIABLE ALTERNATIVES. AN ARAB GUARANTEE MIGHT THUS IN THE EVENT HAVE TO BE CLOTHED IN THE MANTLE OF AFRO-ARAB COOPERATION. SUCH A SOLUTION MIGHT HAVE OTHER ADVANTAGES. DEPENDING UPON ITS NATURE, IT COULD FOR INSTANCE ASSUAGE THE CONCERNS WHICH THE POSSIBLE EVOLUTION OF THE FRENCH PRESENCE IN TFAI SEEMS BOUND TO RAISE IN RED SEA RIPARIAN CAPITALS FOR GEOPOLITICAL REASONS.

8. ASSUMING A FURTHER EVOLUTION TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE OF TFAI DOWN THE ROAD A PIECE, WE CAN IMAGINE A CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS WHICH MIGHT AT LEAST THEORETICALLY ADMIT OF A CONTINUING FRENCH GUARANTEE/PRESENCE THERE. THE TERRITORY WILL NEED MONEY WHICH FRENCH "RENT" FOR THE USE OF ITS FACILITIES COULD PROVIDE. THE CONTINUING PRESENCE OF FRANCE UNDER SOME POST-INDEPENDENCE UNBRELLA AGREEMENT WITH THE TERRITORIAL GOVT COULD REASSURE SIGNIFICANT ARAB/AFRICAN INTERESTS TROUBLED BY THE LAUNCHING OF THIS POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY FRAGILE ENTITY UPON THE STORMY WATERS OF HORN POLITICS. INDEED, AFRICAN/ARAB PRESSURES FOR DECOLONIZATION COULD CONCEIVABLY YET COME TO BE SUFFICIENTLY MODERATED BY THE THREAT OF RESULTING CONFLICT IN THE HORN, TO OFFER FRANCE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH NOW SEEM HIGHLY THEORETICAL. ARAB/AFRICAN REACTIONS TO THE NOW PROVED EXISTENCE OF AN EXTENSIVE SOVIET FACILITY AT BERBERA COULD ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO SUCH A TURN OF EVENTS.

9. PRESUMABLY, THESE POSSIBILITIES -- IF THEY EVENTUATE -- WOULD HAVE TO BE WEIGHED IN PARIS AGAINST THE IMPORTANCE OF FRENCH INTERESTS IN THE TFAI FOOTHOLD. EMB PARIS HAS ALREADY REPORTED THAT THE STRENGTH OF THE LEFT IN FRENCH POLITICS IS A FACTOR WHICH COULD PROVE TO BE CENTRAL IF IT INCREASES. WE, HERE, GO ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT FRANCE WILL WISH TO REMAIN AT THE PORTALS OF THE RED SEA AS LONG AS PARIS'S COST-BENEFIT CALCULATION PERMITS. AS AGAINST FRANCE'S INTERESTS THERE  
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LIE THE UNCERTAINTIES OF TENURE, OF AUTHORITY, OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND PRESSURES. HOWEVER, THE SHRINKAGE OF FRENCH ALTERNATIVES IN THIS REGION BEGUN AT DIEGO SUAREZ AND CONTINUING NOW IN THE COMORES SHOULD BE A FACTOR WHICH A FRANCE INTERESTED IN CONTINUING ACCESS/PRESENCE/TRANSIT IN AND THROUGH THESE SEAS WOULD SEEM TO HAVE TO WEIGH AS IT CONSIDERS ITS DJIBOUTI CHOICES.  
HUMMEL

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, INDEPENDENCE, POLITICAL SUMMARIES, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 12 AUG 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** RowellE0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975ADDIS09668  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750278-0279  
**From:** ADDIS ABABA  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750858/aaaabyuu.tel  
**Line Count:** 209  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION AF  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 ADDIS ABABA 6459, 75 ADDIS ABABA 5927  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** RowellE0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 21 MAY 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <21 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2003 by RowellE0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** THINKING ABOUT TFAI  
**TAGS:** PFOR, ET, XF, XA, FR  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006